



May 12, 2023

**Testimony in Support of LD 1817
An Act to Support Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program**

Greetings Chairs Senator Ingwersen and Representative Pluecker, and members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Angela King, Advocacy Manager for the Bicycle Coalition of Maine. Our mission is to make Maine better and safer for bicycling and walking. On behalf of our more than 20,000 members and supporters, I am submitting testimony in support of LD 1817 “An Act to Support Outdoor Education by Establishing the Outdoor School for All Maine Students Program”

The Bicycle Coalition of Maine is the statewide organization that advocates for bicyclists and pedestrians. We work to make Maine better for bicycling and walking, and to protect the safety and rights of vulnerable users of the public ways. Our work in advocacy, education, and events is to encourage people to be outdoors walking and biking for recreation and transportation.

The Bicycle Coalition of Maine supports LD 1817 to establish the Outdoor School for All Maine Students. Over the past several years, we have all been reminded about the importance of access to safe places to be outside and the positive physical and mental health that comes from spending time outdoors. At the BCM, the demand for our on-bike education work grows each year—signaling to us the energy around bicycle education and access has not waned. A program to ensure all students in Maine have access to outdoor education can help meet the needs of students across the state.

Currently, less than 25% of Maine students get to participate in outdoor school programs. LD 1817 would help to ensure equitable access for all Maine students by removing outdoor school funding barriers and allowing the distribution of grant funding.

Outdoor education programs have proven to build stronger relationships between students and teachers. The positive effect of that will benefit all their education. And for students to experience the benefits of Maine’s beautiful outdoors, they may be inspired to continue to learn more about the natural environment as a career path, build a life-long commitment to active living, and an appreciation for stewarding our lands and waters.

Because of these reasons, the BCM urges an Ought to Pass vote on this bill. Thank you for your time and service to the people of Maine.

Sincerely,

Angela King
Advocacy Manager
Bicycle Coalition of Maine

